

**CITY OF BOULDER
PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD AGENDA ITEM**

MEETING DATE:

AGENDA TITLE: Parks and Recreation Access Update

PRESENTERS:

Yvette Bowden, Parks and Recreation, Director
Alison Rhodes, District Services Manager
Dean Rummel, Programs and Partnerships Manager
Amanda Bevis, Business Analyst
Tim Duda, East Boulder Community Center Center Supervisor

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The 2014 Parks and Recreation Master Plan (master plan) clarified the department's role in promoting the health and well-being of Boulder community members. In January of 2016, Boulder Parks and Recreation (BPR) implemented improvements to its Financial Aid program in an effort to promote service reach to low-income youth and families. Also effective in January 2016, the department expanded access to the Silver Sneakers program to the North and South Boulder Recreation Centers in order to respond to Boulder's aging demographic and provide geographically balanced access to health and well-being services.

The purpose of this item to update the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB) on the implementation of improvements to the Financial Aid program and expansion of the Silver Sneakers program, and also to gather input on the department's ongoing efforts to increase its service reach to Boulder community members.

ANALYSIS:

Financial Aid Program

The department's Financial Aid program includes several elements to reduce financial barriers to participation in Parks and Recreation services. The Financial Aid program itself offers qualifying community members a 50% discount on facility access and program registration. As a result of 2016 improvements to the program, proof of legal presence is no longer required for participation in the program. This requirement previously limited access to adult community members, and did not apply to children. As a result of eliminating this requirement, the department has seen a 25% increase in adult

applications. The majority of these are parents of children previously qualified in the program, and as a result families are now able to affordably recreate together.

The department is also building upon its partnership with Boulder Housing Partners (BHP), the city's housing authority, to provide affordable access to low-income youth and families living in public housing. As housing applications are renewed in June and July, BHP will verify applicants' income and pre-qualify them for BPR's Financial Aid program. This will streamline the Financial Aid registration process for residents of public housing and eliminate the need for them to verify their income with both BHP and BPR.

Also effective January, 2016, community members may now register for the Financial Aid program at all three recreation centers. Registration was previously facilitated only at the Iris Center between the hours of 8:00a.m.-5:00p.m., and has since been expanded to make Financial Aid registration more convenient and accessible. Through the first quarter of 2016, 25% of applicants registered at one of the recreation centers.

Finally, participation in Colorado's Childcare Assistance Program (CCAP) is now an element of the department's Financial Aid offerings. CCAP provides a pathway for families to access affordable childcare through subsidies to licensed programs. This summer the department is piloting 10 summer camp participation spots at the East Boulder Community Center (Kidz Kamp). Currently, staff are aware of 10 families waiting for authorization from Boulder County Humans Services who will be enjoying multiple weeks at our camp program. With the anticipated successes of 2016, staff expect to add access to additional locations in future seasons. In addition to summer camps, families will be able to utilize CCAP funding throughout the school year to participate in school day off camps.

Silver Sneakers

Effective Jan. 1, 2016, the department expanded access to the popular Healthways SilverSneakers® Fitness to all three BPR recreation facilities including the North Boulder Recreation Center and South Boulder Recreation Center, in addition to the existing program at the East Boulder Community Center. To support the expansion, staff have added new Silver Sneakers programming, such as CardioFit classes at North and South.

SilverSneakers is the nation's leading exercise program for active older adults and has been part of the programming at the East Boulder Community Center and Senior Center since 2008. This program expansion is informed by a 2015 SilverSneakers user group survey, indicating that convenient, affordable access to physical health and well-being resources is important to Boulder's aging population – the city's fastest growing demographic.

As a result of the expansion and general growth in program registration, first quarter participation numbers demonstrate a nearly 50% increase over 2015 numbers. Silver Sneakers participations at East are up an estimated 5%, with the majority of the increase attributed to visits at the North and South Boulder Recreation Centers. Active enrollees in the Silver Sneakers program have grown from an average of 1,494 in the first quarter of

2015 to an average of 2,141 in the same period in 2016. While half of the participation reflects a direct transfer of community members who previously held BPR annual passes or punchcards, roughly half of the active enrollees in the Silver Sneakers program appear to be new to the BPR system.

Marketing and Outreach to Spanish-speaking Community members

To promote accessibility to Spanish-speaking community members, the department is translating more and more of its program materials into Spanish. All of the Financial Aid documents are available in Spanish and special event promotional materials are being translated and distributed via the Youth Services Initiative (YSI) and partnership with Boulder Housing Partners. Also, non-Spanish speaking YSI staff have completed a pilot program to teach staff Spanish.

Next Steps

Staff will continue to monitor participation in the Financial Aid and Silver Sneakers programs. Next steps to explore the department's service reach to target demographics include:

- Evaluation of a sliding scale framework to determine its financial implications;
- Exploration of Spanish classes for staff;
- Continue to develop program and event materials in Spanish;
- Research of the size, characteristics and health and wellness needs of Boulder's low-income community;
- Research the feasibility of expanding Silver Sneakers access to include outdoor amenities such as the outdoor pools and Boulder Reservoir.

Questions For PRAB

- 1) What questions does the board have about the department's efforts to increase service reach to target populations?
- 2) What suggestions does the board have to inform the department's ongoing efforts to increase service reach to target populations?